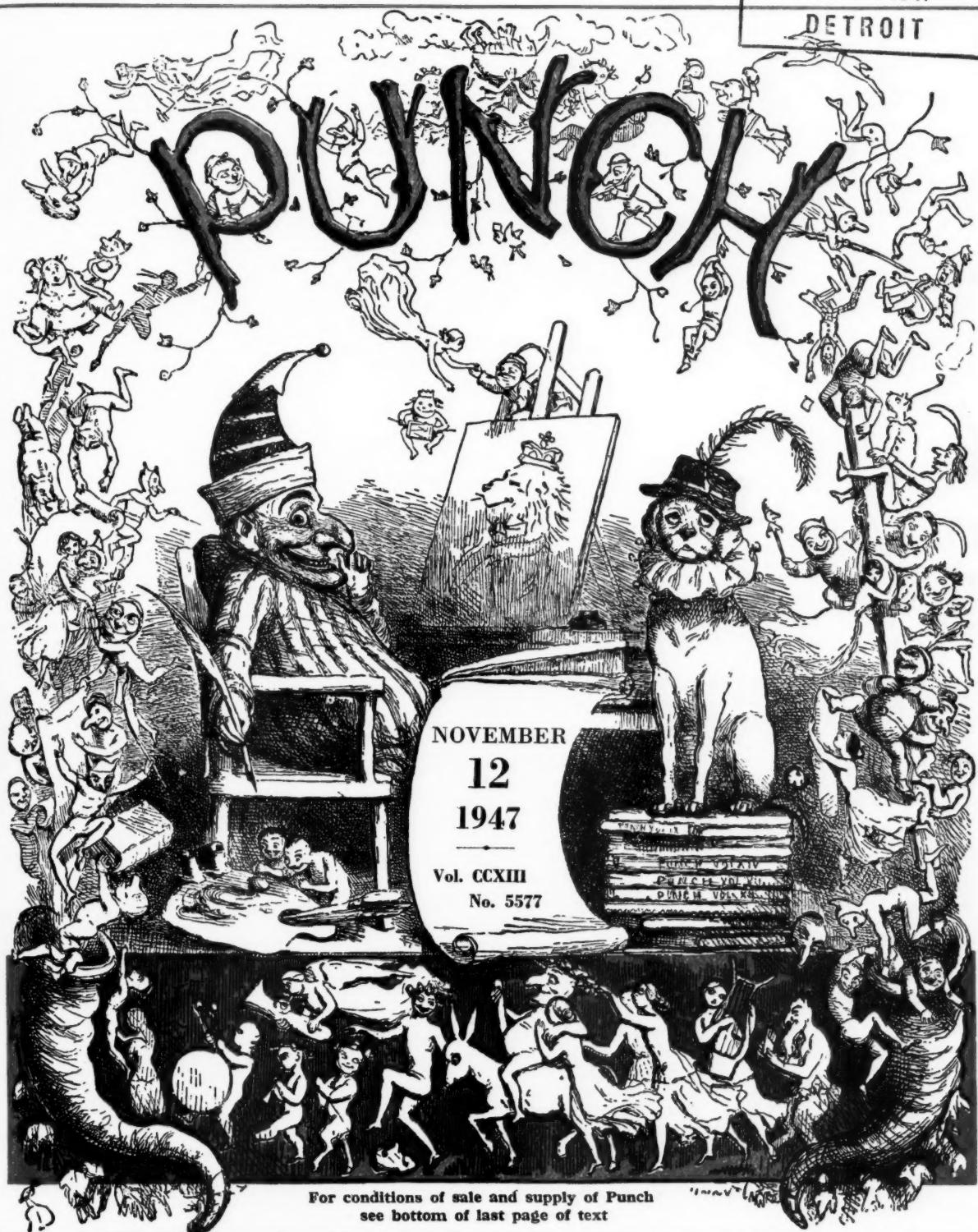


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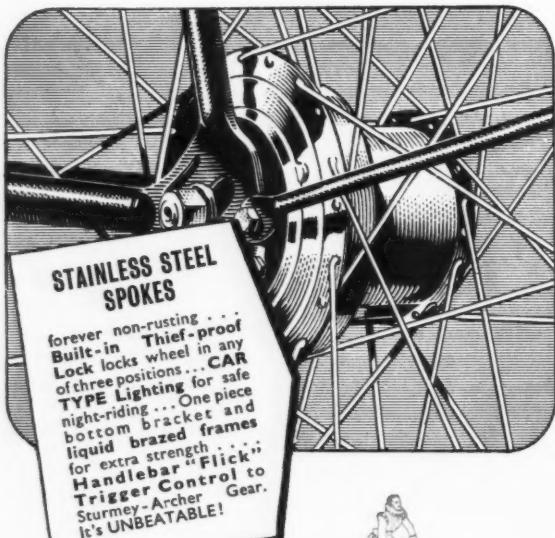
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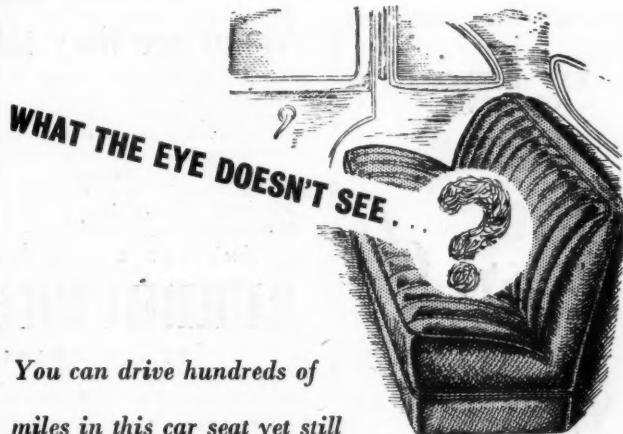
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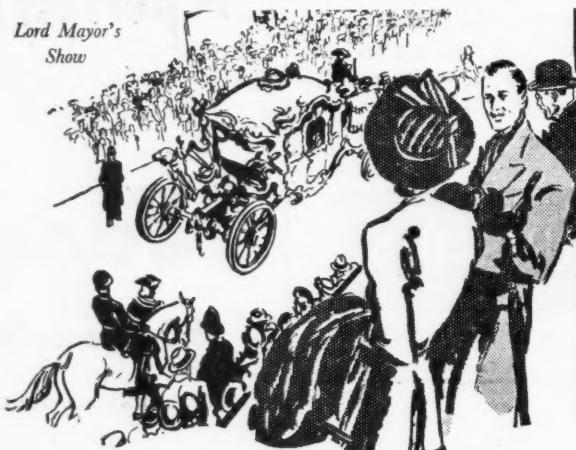


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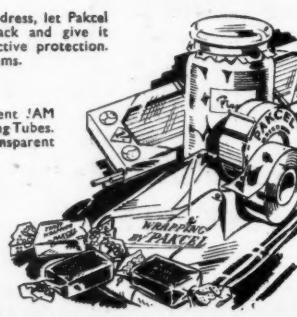
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I'VE WAITED FIVE YEARS says OLD HETHERS

I've waited patiently for five long years, madam, to be able to say "Robinson's Barley Water is back again in bottles". And now it's only a matter of a month or two. Won't all my old friends be pleased! "Hethers", they'll say, "You told us we'd got to be patient; you told us how to make barley water at home; you even invented flavourings for us in the lean years—but you've never said anything so welcome as those three words, Robinson's is back." That's the sort of thing I'll be hearing before very long.

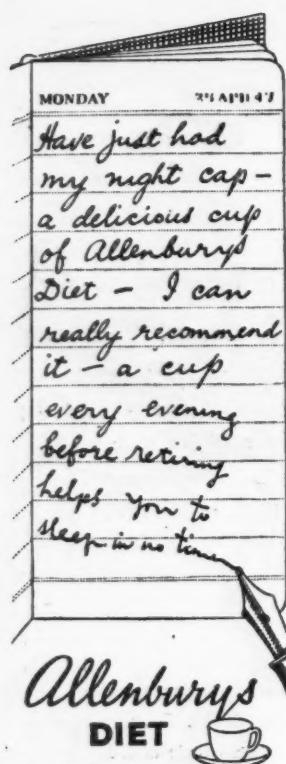
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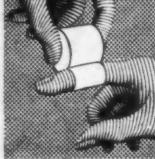


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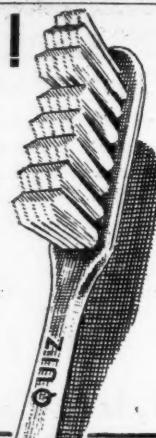
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If you are seeking relief from indigestion in any form you are recommended to try Simpkin's Vitalised Stomach Powder. Each teaspoonful contains, in addition to the enzymes, diastase and papaïne, 35 international units of Vitamin B₁. If difficult to obtain send P.O. 1/8d. with name and address of your chemist for standard package to the manufacturers A. L. Simpkin & Co. Ltd., (Dept. P) Hunter Road, Sheffield.

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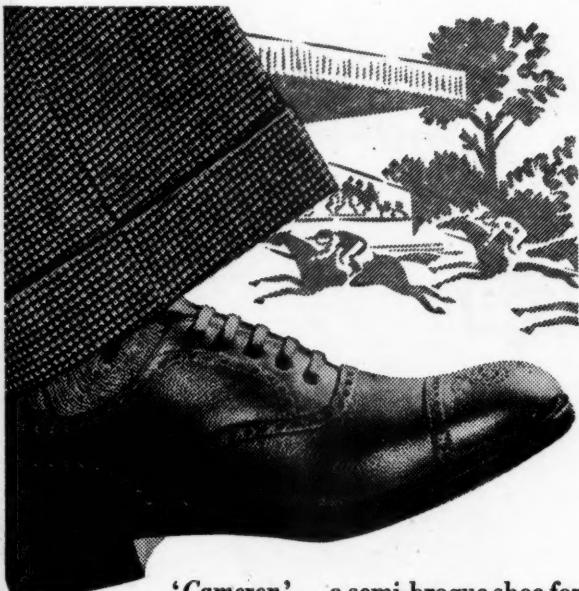
VITALISED STOMACH POWDER



November

November is the month when preparations for Christmas are made and many thousands of manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers are then working to capacity. Christmas stocks are being produced and delivered, a great nation of shopkeepers is preparing to put goods into its shop windows, and bankers make ready to meet heavy seasonal demands upon their services. Whichever side of the counter will be your concern during the Christmas shopping season, you can depend upon assistance from the Midland Bank, whose wide commercial experience is available at more than 1900 branches throughout England and Wales.

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'Cameron'... a semi-brogue shoe for

occasions in town and country. Good leather, a famous last, fine craftsmanship—characteristic of

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Folly to be wise

Sometimes we secretly regret that we have the accrued knowledge of 25 years' radio experience. It makes our instruments so good—they last too long.

McMichael Radio
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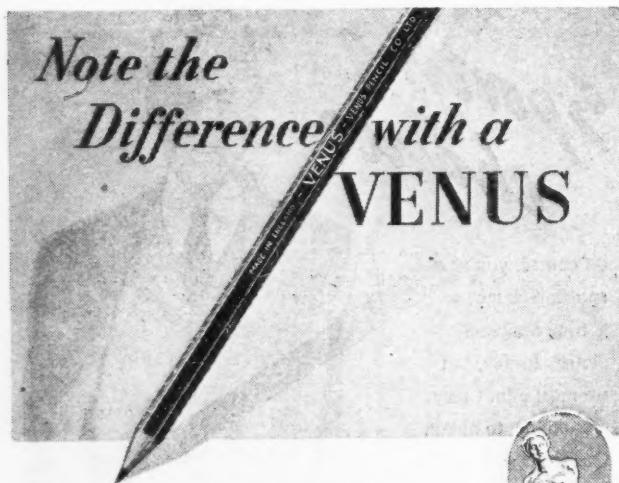
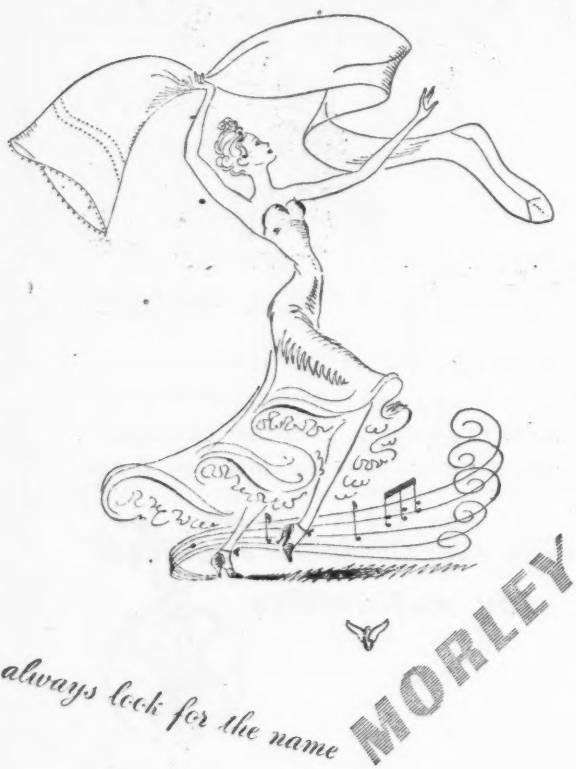


*sporting
chance*

Of course, you've a sporting chance of getting Simpson clothes to-day, but we must admit they are difficult to obtain. Quality is such a rare commodity just now!



For the loveliest nylons ...



When you work with a pencil you need a smooth, strong, even lead—qualities not so easily found in these post-war days. With a VENUS Pencil made by a special colloidal process you can be sure of the quality of your lead. At present there are seven grades to choose from in the VENUS "War Drawing." There are also "Utility" Blacklead, Copying and Coloured pencils. VENUS Pencils will return in our famous branded lines as soon as conditions permit and restrictions are removed.



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*Her Royal Highness
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GRUNGE

OR

The London Charivari



Vol. CCXIII No. 5577

November 12 1947

Charivaria

"SIR STAFFORD CRIPPS," says a well-known columnist, "has become the strong man of the Cabinet." But it is still the Chancellor who does the balancing.

○ ○

A party of carol-singers has already appeared in a London suburb. The leader had a list of likely householders who displayed no niggardliness on November 5th.

○ ○



Scraper Wanted

"We have some excellent farm properties on our boots."
Land agent's advt. in
Rhodesian paper.

○ ○

"It is foreign to the British character to carry knives," says a magistrate. That's why they are seldom chained to restaurant tables although pencils are always firmly fastened to post-offices.

○ ○

Rowdyism was absent from many of the recent election meetings. Even interrupters have asked the reason for the scarcity of boos.

○ ○

It is claimed that at a seance the spirit of Shakespeare was photographed. Bacon would hardly show up on a plate.

○ ○

"Why does a queue line up in twos?" asks a writer. The idea is that each contestant is marked by an opponent. This holds good both in Rugby and shopping.

○ ○

The ideal salesman, according to an industrialist, has 60 per cent. loyalty, 20 per cent. enthusiasm, and 20 per cent. salesmanship. And of course 200 per cent. of pre-war exports.

○ ○

For the Attention of the P.M.G.

"Staccato, angry noises sometimes issue from Mr. Gray's office in Fountain Street, Manchester. He can't bear delays; he leaps from phone to phone breaking them down."—*"News Chronicle."*

○ ○

Argentine cattle are descended from Scottish stock, we are told. But British housewives are convinced that at one time the Manx ox must have been exported in large numbers to the South American pampas.

○ ○

"Fry your whalemeat with an onion to absorb the oil," advises a chef, "and throw away the onion." As well?



○ ○

Unusual Offices

"A completely new block with six bedrooms upstairs and three bedrooms downstairs complete with inconveniences has been constructed on the northern side of the bungalow to accommodate distinguished visitors."—*Ceylon paper.*

○ ○

In America no chicken is served on Thursdays. In this country there is no particular day of the week for no chicken, although in many households the fourth Thursday of December has been set aside for no turkey.



H. J.'s Dramatic Fragments

I TOSSED off this Fragment to quieten a committee which wanted something done about British Culture and wanted it done fast. This committee had got hold of a few funds and were prepared to have anything really cultural cabled to foreign parts, surface mail being too slow for them as they were anxious to get things well under way before the next Honours List.

THE EARLY BIRD MISSES THE FIREFLIES.

(The scene is a conservatory during a dance. Enter ARTHUR P. and SHEILA D. The year is 19—, the place somewhere not three hundred miles from Charing Cross. No further sacrifices will be made in the cause of verisimilitude.)

ARTHUR. I don't think we dance too badly together.
SHEILA. Given the opportunity, I dance very well indeed.

ARTHUR. With some partners there is, no doubt, nothing else to do. Personally, I try to provide a more varied entertainment.

SHEILA. Avoiding your smile certainly took my mind off your puns.

ARTHUR. To a generation whose parents have starved it of puns my witticisms would appear strikingly original.

SHEILA. It seems a strange introduction to a proposal to suggest that I belong to a bygone age.

ARTHUR. It's your proposal: I am merely the audience.

SHEILA. Aren't you undertaking the proposal yourself, then?

ARTHUR. You do date, don't you? When we sit over the fire in the long winter evenings your reminiscences of bygone days will enthrall me, at least at first. Nowadays the better job proposes to the worse. As you do far less work than I do and get paid out of all proportion to the value of your labours, the bidding obviously starts with you, and I am waiting with mounting impatience for you to begin your attentions.

Enter SHEILA's kid brother, OSWALD

OSWALD. One is sorry if one has interrupted a love-passage. One wishes merely to inquire whether one must remain until the bitter end of these festivities. One would prefer to return home and closet oneself with the judicious Gibbon.

SHEILA. Mother said you lacked a social sense, and a social sense is what you are going to develop. Go away and feed girls with ices.

OSWALD. One sighs as a scholar and obeys as a brother. [Exit

ARTHUR. Oswald throws a lurid light on the effect of being nurtured among the elderly. Does he call you "Aunty"? Now please get your sales-talk over quickly or we shall miss supper.

SHEILA. You seem to assume that any proposal I made would be acceptable to you: aren't you being rather rash?

ARTHUR. Certainly not. I am tired of being the prey of every dowager. Sooner or later I shall fall, and I wish to fall at my own time; I am already reaching the prime of my youth. Besides, if I become engaged to-night I can be married in the early spring, an excellent season for a honeymoon.

SHEILA. It is sad that I must spoil this well-carpentered scheme by my silence.

ARTHUR. I am in favour of a taciturn wooing. There is nothing I should abhor more than waiting while you polished your introductory compliments and stammered out the inarticulate offer of your heart. A few animal cries of despairing adoration or even a stifled sob would do just as well.

SHEILA. I wouldn't marry you if you were the last man in the world.

ARTHUR. Of course you wouldn't: there would be nobody to perform the ceremony. But perhaps you are imagining that you will be a tremendous success as a spinster. I doubt it. What would your life be like with nobody to cover up for you, nobody to guide the conversation gently away when you made a bloomer? As my wife you would be cushioned against the world by my dexterity, my charm, and my drive.

SHEILA. Surely with all that you could do better than me.

ARTHUR. Of course I could if my main object in life were pleasure. I happen to be an ascetic. No, Norma—

SHEILA. Sheila happens to be the name.

ARTHUR. We can adjust the details afterwards. I believe some kind of affectionate diminutive is customary among the wed—piglet, for example, or kittikins. But we must stop dallying. (For a moment he opens the French window through which is heard the band.)

BAND LEADER. Tchah tchah tchah,
Tchoo tchoo tchoo,
Now ah knows, honey, what ah'm
gwine t' do.

ARTHUR. There—my favourite tune and we're missing it. I will not embarrass you further by waiting for a verbal offer. The language of your eyes shall suffice. I respond to your mute entreaties with the manly words "What will be, will be."

Enter OSWALD

OSWALD. Apollo flees: Diana holds the chase. There are limits to the social endurance of any man.

ARTHUR. Oswald, I have just thrown the life-line to Sheila. You see in me your future brother-in-law, the support and stay of your sister's declining years.

OSWALD. Who has hooked whom?

SHEILA. Arthur has entangled himself in his own line: I am still sound in wind, limb, mind and, above all, heart.

ARTHUR. Her maidenly shyness, her pathetic little attempts to conceal what has just passed between us will, if carried further, lead to my suing her for breach of promise.

OSWALD. One foresees a whip-round in the family for damages. One counsels the cheaper path of submission. One returns, faint but heroic, to the social whirl. To your billing; turtle-doves. [Exit

ARTHUR. The existence of Oswald should be allowed for in fixing your dot. My attorney will wait upon your father in the morning. Shall we rejoin the gay throng or would you prefer a moment to restore your composure?

SHEILA. Or for you to lose yours. (She distracts his attention with a flower-pot and pierces him accurately with a bodkin.)

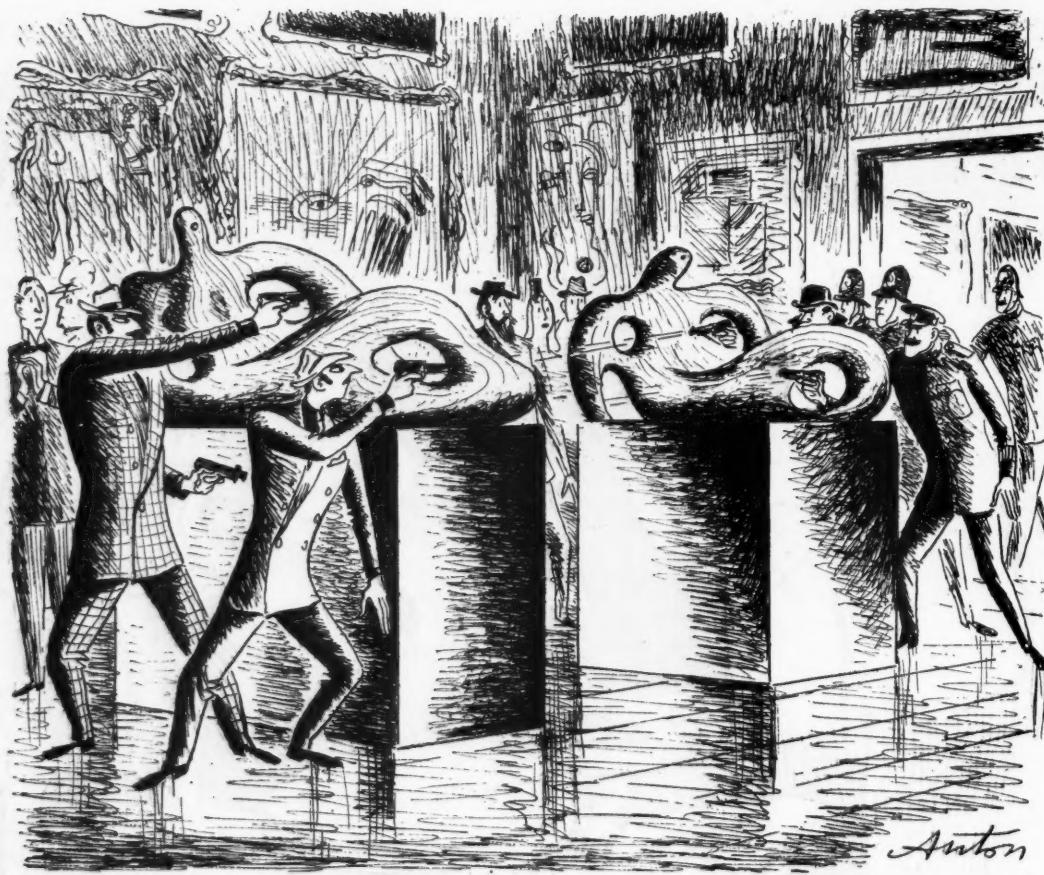
ARTHUR. Well, I never! (Dies.)

FINIS



DEFLATION

"I'm afraid this will be rather painful."
"Go ahead. I shan't be wanting them much this winter."



I Met Un-American Activities.

IT is beginning to look as though I shall not after all be called to give evidence before the House of Representatives Committee on Un-American Activities. A pity, this. But I am certainly not going to waste my carefully-prepared statement. I have something pretty serious to expose. Hollywood may or may not be riddled through and through with un-Americanisms, but it would be wholly misleading to suppose that the rest of the sub-continent is untainted. Besides, I want to see justice meted out to the man Finkleshorn.

The events which I shall now relate occurred about a year ago when the dollar deficit was in its infancy. I arrived at La Salle Station, Chicago, in the early morning just as the last wisps of nocturnal cordite were evaporating, just as the newsboys were rushing the first Anglophobe *sidings* to the populace. The elevated railways rattled, the taxis and their jockeys screamed abuse at the street-cars.

Early commuters (or commutators) commuted.

The lobby of the Sherman Hotel was crowded. I joined the long queue for "Reception," choked back an impulse to scream, and set myself to study the scene. American hotels are nearly all lobby. Let me list the chief features of the Sherman's in order of incredibility. A battery of a dozen express elevators; a formidable row of brilliant pin-tables; an arcade of shops—beauty salon, drug-store, outfitter's, barber's, news-stand, candy-store and so on; a flowing milk-bar; a travel agency; palms, sulking bell-hops . . . oh, yes, and a notice as big as the Arrivals-board at Euston with a schedule of the conventions being accommodated in the building. By the way, a lift and an elevator (Chicago style) have practically nothing in common. A lift has two doors or gates which must be in position before the contraption will move. An elevator has no door: the various strata of the building race past

a few inches from the passenger's nose and only a few millimetres from the extravagant hair-do of the coloured elevator-jockey. By the ruthless elimination of inessentials a convention of meat-packers wins enough time for another highball all round, or for another nickel-worth on the pin-tables.

After half an hour I reached one of many reception clerks and was told that I could inhabit my room at any time after three o'clock. I argued. I was told that I might be installed by 2.30. I was just turning away towards the pin-tables when the mail clerk handed me a slip of paper. "Can you appear radio show? Meet reception air-lines dépôt noon, Finkleshorn," it read.

By 11.45 I had tilted every pin-table to my complete satisfaction, so I took a vermillion taxi to the air-lines dépôt. I asked for Mr. Finkleshorn. They told me to wait. At 12.30 I looked up from the *Chicago Tribune*

into a magazine-cover with brilliant wavy hair, tiers of sparkling teeth and purple-stained mouth and environs. She said that Mr. Finkleshorn would show up. I made room for her on the settee and tried to look self-possessed.

At 12.45 Mr. Finkleshorn showed up and the following conversation took place:

"Say, this is great. Sure am pleasedameety Mr.—er—"

"Hodfellow."

"Ah, sure, Mr. Hardfellow. Mighty good of you, sir, to team along."

"Not at all. If I can be of any—"

"You all set, Joey?"

"Sure, boss."

"About this broadcast, Mr. Finkleshorn. When do you need the script?"

"What's that? Oh, sure, *sure*, Mr. Hardkersel."

"Er—I mean what day will it be?"

"Yeah, s'right. Okay, Joey boy?"

"I'm afraid you don't understand, Mr. Finkleshorn. You see I move on to Minneapolis on Tuesday and—"

"Minneapolis, eh! Swell city, Minneapolis. One of our best rating zones."

"Yes, but—"

"Sure is, none better. Any mail for me, Miss Gleich?"

"Ya, one from the president. Wants us to plug the brushless line more."

"S'that so! The old cloth-head—"

"Excuse me, Mr. Finkleshorn, but I'm afraid I *must* ask you—"

"Oh, gee. I'm sorry, sir. Guess I'm just an ill-mannered punk—"

"Oh, no, it's just that I want to know *when* this broadcast is to be."

"Yessir, I sure am uncouth . . . okeydokey, Joey boy, let's go . . . Quiet, please . . . Good aerfernoon, folks. This is your old friend Ned Finkleshorn with another Philkrema progr'm. Just finger-tip it—no don't rub or smear—just finger-tip it into the facial epidermis. Count five while the special-combination oils get to work among the stubble and then grab your free Philkrema razor. And, brother, is my face smooth! Get a pack of Philkrema to-day, folks. And make it the *giant* pack—it's cheaper, it's sensational, it's *Philkrema* . . . And now, folks, we have the honour to present none other than that celebrated British—er—Britisher, Mr. Henklatser, who's just stepped right off the transatlan'ic plane. Ladies and gentlemen . . . Mr. Henklatser . . ."

Mr. Finkleshorn removed the microphone from his mouth and jerked it at my chattering teeth. I looked hard at the thing, absorbing every detail of its structure. American hand-microphones are much, much smaller than I imagine the British model to be.

There's a sort of criss-cross wire effect over the diaphragm and the whole thing gets decked with beads of vapour very quickly. There is no gate or door . . .

"Mr. Henklatser!"

"Why—er—oh, yes. Oh, good even—afternoon, American listeners . . . Actually I didn't arrive in Chicago by plane but . . ."

"Thanks, Mr. Henklatser, and now one more question—a personal one" (laughing outrageously) "if you don't mind?"

"Why, no—I don't think so."

"Didya hear that, folks? Okay, Mr. Hardkersel, give us the spiel. Do you or do you not shave? Think carefully before you answer!"

"Why" (sniggering outrageously) "of course I do."

"Then, Mr. Hardfellow, I'm going to *stop* you shaving right away. I'm going to introduce you to Philkrema. Try it to-day. Feel its special-combination oils revitalizing your epidermis. Philkrema is different. It's cheaper, it's sensational, it's *Philkrema* . . ."

Mr. Finkleshorn's face relaxed suddenly. Dabbing at his damp brow with a silk handkerchief he turned and thanked me.

"That was great. I gotta thank you on behalf of the comp'ny—the president'll be tickled to death. He's nuts on you Britishers."

I was practically under a taxi-cab when I heard Miss Gleich's voice. "You forgot your Philkrema," she said.

* * * * *

The name, gentlemen of the House of Representatives Committee on Un-American Activities, is Finkleshorn. The place, Chicago. The shaving-muck, Philkrema. Don't waste your time on Charlie Chaplin and Groucho Marx. Get after this Finkleshorn without delay. And get the G-men, the Ku-Klux-Klan and Hollywood to help.

Hod.

o o

British Weather Testimonial

"One hears of a windscreens wiper returned to — Ltd., for minor repairs after having given 19 years' continuous trouble-free service."—*Motor trade paper*.

o o

"At two-hourly intervals yesterday the visitors to the exhibition were asked to stand still, and those nearest to articles earmarked as gifts were given as prizes."—*Sunday paper*.

And singularly unwelcome some of them were.

Correspondence

Editor, "Punch" Magazine, London, England

DEAR SIR,—I am writing a bit late concerning the article, "An Innocent at Large," of the January 8th, 1947, issue. This particular article had to do with the visit of "Hon" to the Republic of Texas, U.S.A.; however, there are several serious mistakes and omissions.

One of the most grievous errors (and one which is often made by many Texans, oddly enough) is that the author listed "The Eyes of Texas" as the state song. It most definitely is not! It is the official school song of the University of Texas, including currently about 18,000 younger Texans on its enrolment. The official state song is "Texas, Our Texas," and the music was composed by William Marsh, director of the Mixed Chorus of Texas Christian University, and a former Englishman, Briton, or whatever it may be. (I believe that "Uncle Billy," the title used by T.C.U. students, was a scholarship student at Oxford.)

Furthermore, there has been a grievous omission of dates in the history of the world as Texans see them:

1492. Christopher Columbus, a naturalized Texan, discovered America.

1775. Paul Revere's Ride (Revere wasn't a Texan, but his horse was, and he could not go far without the horse).

1836. Texas won its independence from Mexico (late of Spain).

1846. The "Union" joined Texas (after Texas was recognized a nation by both the British Empire and France).

1941. Texas decided to join the U.S. and other nations and enter the war against Germany, Italy, and Japan.

1945. Germany lost hope when Texas refused to make a separate treaty.

And on into future time, the Republic of Texas advances.

To close, there is the ancient tale reprinted some months back in the *Reader's Digest* of the farmer in Texas who overheard his son asking a stranger where he was from. The farmer called the boy off to the side and dressed him down with the advice: "Son, don't ever ask a man where he's from. If he's from Texas, he'll tell you. If he's not, there's no use to embarrass him."

Yours fraternally,
A TEXAN.

IT will be a pleasant change for you, perhaps, to find a film article that doesn't begin with something about *Monsieur Verdoux* (which I hope to deal with next time). This one begins with the Italian *Vivere in Pace* (Director: LUIGI ZAMPA)—we may as well index it under its original, international title, though it is advertised more prominently in translation

[*Vivere in Pace*]

GHOST HUNT

The Grandfather . . . ERNESTO ALMIRANTE
Uncle Tigna . . . ALDO FABRIZI

as *To Live in Peace*—which I found intensely enjoyable, faults and all, and recommend almost without reserve. To dispose of the faults first: it is perhaps a bit unbalanced (for our taste) in going all out for such tragic as well as such comic effects; we have grown to look with suspicion at staged tearful death-bed scenes; there is another more important scene that goes on far too long; and the "love interest" seems somewhat pedestrian and as if grafted on, with the joins showing. But how wonderfully, brilliantly good the film is nevertheless! This war-time story of an Italian mountain village, remote from the fighting, which is thrown into uneasiness by the appearance of two escaped U.S. prisoners, has been done with a warmth and skill that make it a very welcome experience. The main trouble

At the Pictures

Vivere in Pace—The Woman in the Hall—They Won't Believe Me

for the shopkeeper who shelters them is that one of the escaped men is a Negro ("I can hardly say he's my cousin"); and the two people from whom it is essential to hide this disturbing presence are the resident German N.C.O., and—even more—the local "party secretary," a much more unpleasant and suspicious character. The big scene is when the German and the Negro foregather, roaring drunk; and the big moment of suspense is when the whole village waits for the German to wake on the morning after. It is the drunk scene of violence that lasts too long, very amusing though much of it is. But nothing can spoil the general effect of this genial, civilized film, or the brilliance of ALDO FABRIZI as the kind, worried, comic shopkeeper who at last suffers (almost by accident) for having let his humanity get the better of him. This is one you should make a real effort to see, and one that would probably repay wide distribution in this country if any "commercial" circuit would risk it.

Without having read G. B. STERN's original novel, I give it most of the credit for the interest of *The Woman in the Hall* (Director: JACK LEE); for though the film is competently made it has nothing very

impressive in what might be called the purely cinematic department. It tells its tale straightforwardly, without tricks; at no moment is one suddenly shocked into the thought that that was a remarkably clever bit of direction. Yet it holds the attention—largely, I suggest, because it has a unifying idea, based on character. It considers the position of the children of a woman who lives by cheap fraud, the sort of woman who has a detailed but totally false story of needing the fare to Liverpool and exists, quite comfortably,

by telling it to sucker after sucker. It further succeeds in conveying the idea that this particular woman genuinely enjoys the excitement of so living ("The trouble with you is," says her candid friend, "you're an artist"), and there is a point here that offers an opportunity for a smart, trick, short-story sort of ending which (though it would leave one or two problems in the air) might be preferable to the present one, about fifteen minutes later, which seems out of character and raises more questions than it solves. URUSLA JEANS is unobtrusively good as the complete phoney, JEAN SIMMONS is appealing as the more troubled of her daughters, and CECIL PARKER in the part of a cautious country gentleman of wealth is often very amusing indeed.

As for *They Won't Believe Me* (Director: IRVING PICHEL), "the shock of a lifetime," say the posters, "awaits you in the climax"—which in view of that it would be ungracious of me, I suppose, to reveal. An empty story, of the sort usually called "sordid"; but there is a good deal of pleasure to be got from watching the extreme skill of the players, notably ROBERT YOUNG, who appears as a worthless character with a fatal (but *fatal*) attraction for women.

R. M.

[*The Woman in the Hall*]

HUSBAND HUNT

Sir Halmar CECIL PARKER
Lorna Blake URUSLA JEANS

Coming Later

IDON'T expect the young gentleman would care for Steak Dalmatienne," said the waiter, whose life was now nothing, and what else could it be, but a long sadness.

"I like steak," the young gentleman protested.

"It's only called that to keep us amused," I explained. "It's really things that have died at the Zoo put through a wringer with some old toast."

"So long as I can have ice-cream I honestly don't mind what I have first."

"I dare say I could find a sausage," declared the waiter, with the air of being resolved to put on his hat and go out and comb the larders of S.W.1.

"Please do," I said.

My guest turned his earnest attention to the crowded room.

"What are clubs for besides eating sausages?" he asked.

"They make a friendly place for cashing cheques and straightening the tie."

"When Jeremy Hiscocks lunched with his father at his club they had a smashing bishop at the next table." He eyed our bushy-whiskered neighbour with marked disappointment.

"You should have told me earlier. That kind of thing takes a bit of arranging."

"It doesn't matter, really. Where did you have your first proper lunch with your father?"

"I can't remember where or when. All I know is he gave me an oyster and I said 'Seaweed!' in a loud voice. My memory's a sieve. It's a great handicap."

"Sausages, sir," murmured the waiter, out of breath but mildly triumphant.

"Why?"

"Well, for one thing I'll never be able to write my autobiography."

"What d'ye mean, autobiography?"

"When people get to about sixty they suddenly feel a tremendous urge to put all about themselves in a book. Other people beg them not to, but they seldom listen. They often begin: 'My second birthday is as vivid to me as if it had been only yesterday. How well I remember my dear mother leaning over my cot with a large box of sugared almonds.'"

"That must be a frightful lie. What else do they put in?"

"Oh, all the things they've said to people, and of course if they've been to the North Pole or fallen off a trolleybus that all helps."

"I see. Would enough things have happened to you?"

"To me? Plenty of things have happened to me, only I don't remember more than little bits of them. For instance, a baronet on a boat-train once told me a sure cure for hay-fever. Now that should be good for page after page of healthy reading, but without the name of the baronet or where we were going or even what the cure was it would fall flat as flat."

"You're sure it was hay-fever?"

"Well, there you are. Not absolutely."

"Your ice-creams, sir," breathed the waiter.

"If I were you," I said, "I'd start thinking in terms of my autobiography right away. In fact I'd regard the next fifty years of your life solely as a preparation for it. They'll be far more interesting, and even if something perfectly beastly happens you can always say to yourself 'This will be the making of Chapter 17!'"

"Would this lunch be a good place to start at?"

"Wonderful. In fifty years you'll either be gnawing roots or else decent food will have come back again, and a page on Steak Dalmatienne should prove fascinating. And, by the time you publish, a club will be an added interest because there won't be any by then."

"Why not?"

"They'll all have been turned into day-nurseries for infant commissioners. Also, it will give you a chance to open on the safest note of all, your father."

"Are you sure that's wise?"

"A little more ice-cream, sir?" urged the waiter.

"It never fails. Only you must be very careful about the tone. I mean, the sort of would-be-clever who begins: 'My father, a small bandy-legged man who suffered greatly from pimples, had lost most of his friends by the time I was born owing to a habit of grunting which grew more and more pronounced as the years went by,' loses sympathy from the start. On the other hand something glowing and generous, like 'Often in childhood have I sat content to marvel at the play of wisdom and beauty over my father's striking features,' puts the reader immediately in a happy and melting mood."

"That's going it a bit, isn't it?"

"Not at all. If you remind me when we get home I'll be glad to draft you something on those lines."

"Just a little more ice-cream, sir, for the young gentleman?"

"I think I could write quite a lot about that man sitting at the next table."

"Admirable. Deal with him as a social specimen of 1947. Do a drawing of his whiskers on the back of the menu in case half a century should dim them. 'How electrified we were,' you might say, 'to hear his pince-nez fall with a splash into his soup!'"

"But they haven't!"

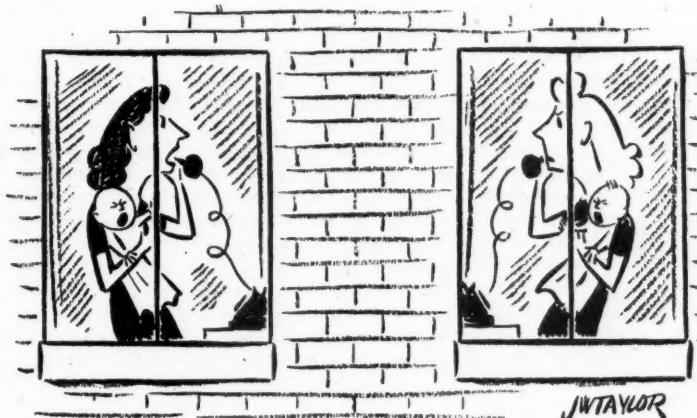
"Give them time," I said. "Give them fifty years."

A shadow seemed to fall upon our pleasant conversation.

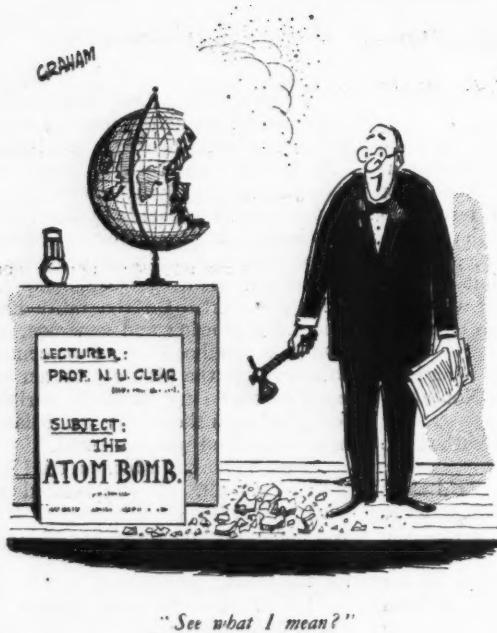
"I'm most awfully sorry, but I'm going to be sick."

"Think nothing of it," I said, but moving quickly. "What more human ending could you possibly have chosen for your first chapter?"

ERIC.



"What sort of tempo is that—on the 'tree top' before I'm through with 'bye baby'?"



Style

STYLE—I mean for the moment literary style—may be defined as the way a thing is written; but this is probably not the right definition, because style is always supposed to be well-nigh indefinable, like a sense of humour, or charm. However, the point about indefinable qualities is that they are very easy to recognize or people wouldn't worry about them, and I think there can be few of my readers who have not noticed the difference in style between a dictionary and a children's comic. It is more than a question of exclamation marks. The two approaches to life are poles apart, one holding that a bucket over a door will solve most troubles, the other that what matters is accuracy.

Dictionaries are very good examples of their own unique style, the keynote of which is, frankly, superiority. They know everything, and the effect on their style is, equally frankly, to make them pompous. By this harsh word I mean that they display a sort of impartial stuffiness, a tendency not to use slang or put in bits about their childhood, a refusal to get carried away by definitions of crumpets, and a niggling streak which reaches its climax in those crazy pages of words beginning with "un." But the average dictionary has many good literary points, including a bygone fragrance when describing anything to do with clothes. Only a dictionary, for example, believes that bombazine is still a force in the textile world. I cannot mention bygone fragrance without bringing in the style of certain printed announcements in shops. You would hardly know, to read one of these polite notices, that American talking pictures had been invented; nor would you guess that the only time the word "purchase" gets said by normal citizens is when these notices are being read aloud by people in queues.

BEFORE I was led away by dictionaries I had been about to tell my readers some of the things they have been told before about style in general. I am quite sure they were told, very early on and very sternly, not to end

sentences with prepositions, a rule they will have sorted out for themselves by now according to their temperaments; and I am fairly sure they went through a stage of not being allowed to use the same word twice in two lines, so that when they had mentioned Shakespeare they had to call him the Bard next time. Only boxing-reporters seem to be lastingly influenced by this rule. The one about split infinitives is a more serious matter, and keen types would rather do anything than split an infinitive, even shove the adverb in where it hardly makes sense. About the only other general style rule my readers will remember is official disapproval of purple patches. These are of course the bits people are proudest of having written, and humanity would not be human if it did not tell itself that any bit it is proud of having written is not a purple patch but a bit anyone else would be proud to have written. This does not, by the way, apply to letters written late at night about life. They are inclined to look over-poetic in daylight and rarely get as far as the envelope.

I don't suppose that when my readers were young they were told whether they should or shouldn't use three dots in a row. Statisticians say the subject doesn't come up at school because by the time people want to end a sentence with three dots they are old enough to be wistful, or out in the big world, so that the question has never been settled intolerantly. I should like, though, to mention the effect a free use of these dots has on the public: a belief that if you took the dots away you would have the same words looking not so happy, besides saving paper. A free use of commas has quite a different effect; it gives people the idea that they are reading about a sale of work in a very small local paper, as indeed they probably are. Paragraphs are closely connected with literary style. On the whole, the fewer paragraphs people use the more literary they fancy they are being, which makes it strange that the longest paragraph known to mankind—the six-page letter from someone with a lot of news about the family—is also the least literary. The only other kind of punctuation I shall deal with is the bracket. Letter-writers who put square brackets inside round brackets derive directly from algebra and feel very educated.

THOSE of my readers who write poetry—and statisticians say that out of every ten people who don't, about half a person is holding back consciously—those who, as I was saying, do actually write the stuff must have noticed what a difference it makes when you get the words right. Poetry depends, indeed, as no other branch of writing does on style, and I should like to say a few helpful words on this important subject. Poetry may nowadays be written in two ways, modern or not modern, and experts have long wondered why some people write one kind and some another. All they can suggest is that people who write modern poetry are in a hurry to get finished. But I said I was going to be helpful, and the people I want to help with modern poetry are the readers. A great many readers of modern poetry end up feeling that they still haven't got it right; that if they lingered over the gaps, or telescoped the huddles, they would get what the writer is aiming at. (I am of course referring to readers who take the trouble to do a bit of mouthing, for modern poetry read as print, for the facts it contains, gives little trouble.) I can only advise that readers worrying over modern poetry should give it a fair trial in the sort of voice the writer himself might use, and wait for the next time the wireless recites any similar poetry. They will see how expression helps. With non-modern poetry expression does not help at all; the result is a lot of unhappy listeners struggling to see the print in their minds.



"You rang for me, sir?"

I have not said much about the actual style of poetry, so I had better add that nearly every poet, I mean nearly every non-modern poet, writes differently from nearly every other, and that really old and famous poets write very differently indeed, so that not to recognize a poem by anyone as famous as Milton shows us up for never having read it. This brings me to style in music. It is very important to be able to identify the different styles of different composers, because so often people come into the room while the gramophone or wireless is playing and start hazarding who wrote it, and they can look pretty silly when the truth comes out. Statisticians have noticed that most people can recognize Beethoven if they wait a few seconds, that no one really minds mixing Bach and Handel or Mozart and Haydn because this mixing implies to the mixer a degree of musical perception, and that anyone who thought Liszt was Chopin is positively amazed. When we come to the moderns we have real confusion. Few of the average public have any idea, when up against the tangle of sound which indicates that someone has left the wireless on either by mistake or on purpose, which to suggest of the three or four names at their disposal; and it says much for the time-lag in artistic appreciation that when the composer's name is revealed they think it no reflection on themselves. Nevertheless there can be little doubt that even the most modern composer sticks to his own style, and that if he began to compose like Bach he would be the first to notice.

Finally for a note on style in painting. I shall not try to explain the differences between painters—readers who want that sort of thing probably know it already—but I want to put in a word of praise for the way all painters, except perhaps the muddiest, seem to get the old oil-paint off their brushes before putting the new on; for any of my readers who have tried to clean paint-brushes must have noticed the effect of just one more scrub.

• •

Smart Work

"S. Gray, a local youngster picked up in a trial, was a nippy inside-left and had a hand in all three Hamlet goals. Ball, who led Hamlet smartly, shot the first and third, and Jover, who was off the field while his forehead was being plastered, scored the other."—*Daily paper*.

Enter Two Labourers.

[Enter two Labourers, with bicycles, on way to work.]

First Lab.: My bicycle, outworned by this hill,
Seems like some charger, worn by dreadful
war,

About to sink on a high bastion
That is more meet for eagles to surmount
Than earth-bound steed.

Second Lab.: Now hast thou spoken sooth,
And thy words chime melodious in mine
ear
With mine own thoughts. For this my
bicycle,
Even as thine, is all but wearied out,
And would, methinks, pant out its final
breath
Had it but lungs. Strange that in its two
tyres
Is air enow, and yet it cannot breathe.
Aye, strange indeed.

First Lab.: The hill grows steeper still,
As though it sought to scale the zenith's
height.

With fond impatience of Phaëton.
Shall we dismount and give our metal steeds
Sweet respite? For a man drives not his
steed

Beyond the bourn of its appointed strength
In horrid war, much less where gentle peace
Plays on her pipes in the untroubled mead.
And if a beast, that is no kin of ours,
How much more should we solace and
requite

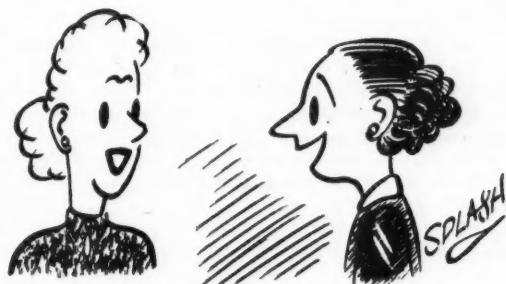
These engines fashioned by the hand of man,
As rose Minerva from the head of Jove.
Thou sayest well: we will dismount indeed
And lead these gentle engines, lest they
tire

And, looking on us with reproachful eye
(For in yon metal is, methinks, a flash
Suggestive of the ocular orb), they seem
To say, "O ingrates."

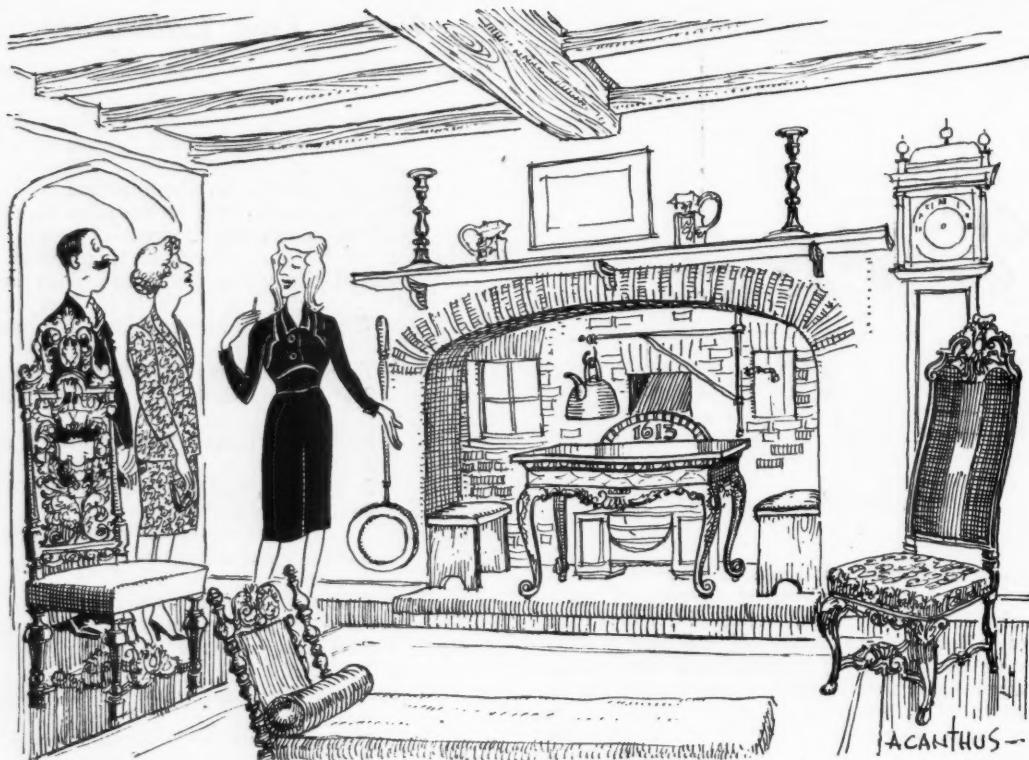
Thou hast wisely said.
We will dismount, then, and will solace them
With gentle pacing by the flowery marge
That skirts this road. . .

[They dismount, and push their bicycles.

ANON.



"John's new business is doing ever so well—he's
three months behind with his orders already!"



“—and this is the dining recess.”

Open Letter to the Ministry of Food

GENTLEMEN,—May I point out with all humility that my grocer receives his supply of cheese on Tuesday, meat-pies on Wednesday, bacon on Thursday, sausages on Friday, and eggs on Saturday? To add to this my butcher has his offal (if any) on Thursday, and my meat ration on Saturday. Furthermore, the baker's cream-buns to which I am partial (together with most of my fellow townsmen) are available between 12.0 and 1.0 on Wednesday, his Swiss roll at 8.30 on Tuesday and his Madeira cake on Friday at the same time. Lastly, my fishmonger sells his kippers on Saturday and occasionally has some rabbits on Monday. (The above details are subject to fluctuation with or without notice.)

I must emphasize that to obtain my supply of meat-pies, I must be on the grocer's doorstep at 9 A.M. prompt, or as near as I can get allowing for the other meat-pie addicts. The same principle applies to the Swiss roll and the Madeira cake except that in the

case of these two it is advisable to pull a fast one on other customers by being there half an hour in advance.

From these details it is a simple matter to draw up the following table:

Monday. Rabbit (?).

Tuesday. Swiss roll (8 A.M.), cheese. Wednesday. Meat-pies (9 A.M.), cream-buns (12 to 1).

Thursday. Offal (as early as possible), bacon.

Friday. Madeira cake (8 A.M.), sausages (9 A.M.).

Saturday. Meat ration, eggs (?), kippers.

You will perhaps understand why until now I have used most of my basic petrol on shopping. Now I find I must cut down these expeditions to two a week. Which days shall I choose?

Saturday heads the poll since on this day I can solve the problems of two dinners and one or two breakfasts. It would thus seem that I must cut out my Friday visit. If I do, I lose my Madeira cake and sausages. If I don't, the Swiss roll, meat-pies, cream-buns

and offal will never find their way to my larder.

As far as Thursday is concerned I am prepared as a patriotic citizen to forgo my ounce of bacon as a contribution to the dollar problem. But then, you see, the rasher would wait for me until Saturday but the offal would not. Wednesday is an important day since meat-pies (9 A.M.) and cream-buns (12 to 1) are involved. But I am not allowed to leave my car in the street for more than twenty minutes in any one hour, and I certainly cannot take it anywhere else or I should be using petrol for an improper journey or something. So how do I wait for my cream-buns? Also, if I go on Wednesday, admittedly I can get my cheese, but am I always to do without Tuesday's Swiss roll and Monday's rabbit?

I was never good at puzzles, gentlemen. Are you?

I have the misfortune to be,

Your reluctant servant,

A HOUSEHOLDER.

MUNI CIPAL ELECTIONS



BELSHAZZAR'S FAST

MONDAY, November 3rd. —It was Captain RAYMOND BLACKBURN, the Right Wing Labour Member, who—patently to his own great surprise—elicited the most-cheered piece of information given to the House of Commons to-day. This was given by Mr. CHRIS MAYHEW, Foreign Under-Secretary, and was that the former Polish Premier, Mr. Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, fleeing from political persecution in Poland, had safely arrived in Britain and had been given leave to land.

This piece of news, out of the blue, which drew the biggest roar of cheers heard in the House for a long time, ended the suspense caused when the Polish statesman "disappeared" some days ago. The House was relieved to find that this disappearance was not to be followed by the customary announcement of a fatal accident or a trial which had the same inevitable and irrevocable result.

Then the House went on to discuss the direction of labour into essential industries. Mr. WILLIE WHITELEY, the Government Chief Whip, clearly had ambitions to use the power of direction into the Government Lobby on a number of his flock who revolted on this issue and demanded the revocation of the power. He succeeded, in the end, in directing all but a handful of the Labour Members into the correct Lobby, and the power remains.

But before that stage was reached some hard things had been said by fiery Mr. RHYS DAVIES, who described the whole thing as totalitarian and unworthy, not to say an invasion of liberty and a gross affront to Democracy. Mr. DAI GRENFELL, a former Mines Minister, followed (as they say in the Law Reports) on the same side. And so did a surprising number of others.

Mr. GEORGE ISAACS, the Minister of Labour, contended that the power was only a little one, and that it had never been used, even though it had existed for a whole month already. There was a lot more excitement before the vote sealed the fate of the proposal that the power of direction should be withdrawn from the Government. And the rebels went quietly.

Judging by the division result, a good many of them had gone quietly before the vote, as the Government's majority was more than a hundred below the normal on an important occasion.

TUESDAY, November 4th. —There is nothing the House of Commons

Impressions of Parliament

Business Done:

Monday, November 3rd. —House of Commons: Revolt

Tuesday, November 4th. —House of Commons: Standing Orders.

Wednesday, November 5th. —House of Commons: Standing Orders are Reviewed.

Thursday, November 6th. —House of Commons: Belated Firework Day.

likes more than a good domestic row. In matters of high policy, in international affairs, the Party lines sometimes tend to merge and blur, and something very like unity creeps over the place.

But give them some matter of domestic concern—something like Standing Orders, for instance, and they will go on for hours, gnawing and worrying it like a whole Cruft's full of rather snappy terriers. It was like that to-day. A number of proposals



Impressions of Parliamentarians

20. Mr. Wilmot (Deptford)

for amendments of the Standing Orders of the House were down for discussion. Among them was a proposal that the consideration given to certain financial business should be speeded up. That took a good many slow hours to discuss. Another, on the normal rising time for the future, kept the House sitting late to-night. Members got extremely angry and "tough" with each other, and the (now customary) charges of totalitarianism were hurled back and forth.

In the midst of all the fire and fury Sir FRANK SOSKICE, the Solicitor-General—surely the most courteous Law Officer the House has ever known—kept calm and logical and gently explanatory, when all around him was chaos and confusion and illogicality. Mr. HERBERT MORRISON, Leader of

the House, and Mr. CHUTER EDE, the Home Secretary, were also in action from time to time, defending the Government's plans. It was all, doubtless, highly important, but oh! so very technical and difficult for the brave (and puzzled) souls who sat hour after hour in the Strangers' Galleries, waiting—maybe—for something to blow up. As the hands of the clock moved towards midnight—and a significant change of date—they took on hopeful expressions.

But one Guido Fawkes (like the debate) was dead, and even when, beyond question, it was

WEDNESDAY, November 5th. —nothing happened. It may have been the municipal election results which had just been declared, showing sweeping Conservative gains, sweeping Labour losses, that caused a certain uneasiness, however. It could have been a sudden consciousness on the part of the Great Elected that it was the anniversary of the most-celebrated "rising" of Parliament ever planned. But there was an air of expectation in the House.

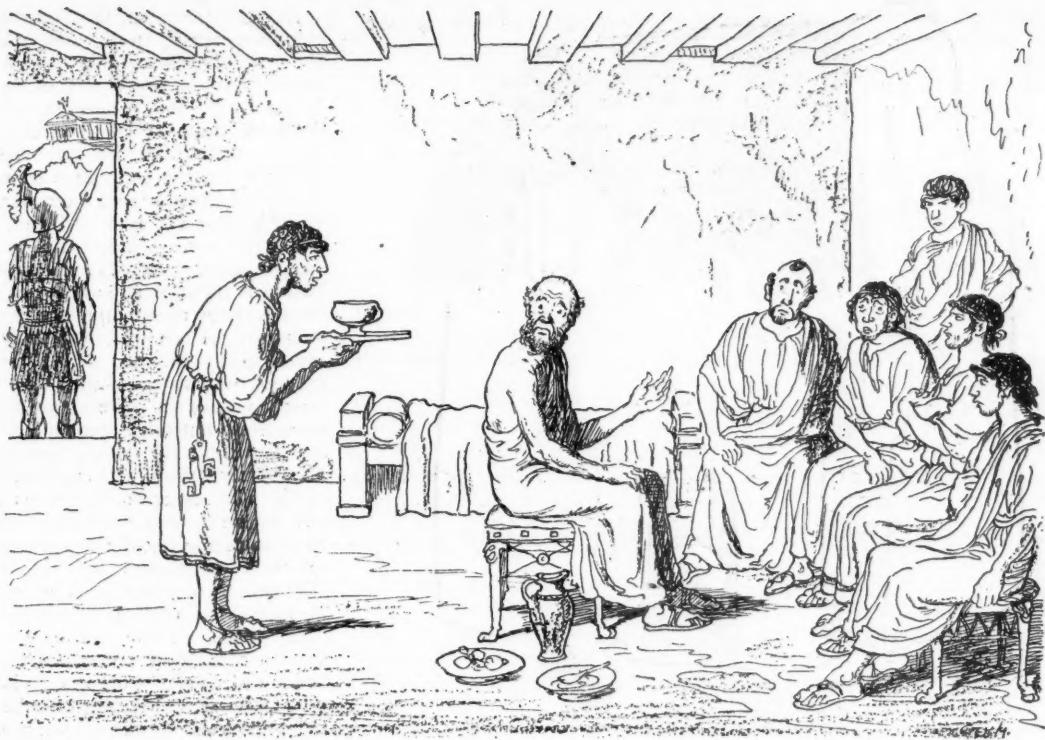
It made both questioners and questioned jumpy. It caused little outbursts of laughter that seemed to have no reasonable explanation.

There was one clear indication that the Members were jumpy and listening anxiously for some explosion from the cellars. Every time a Minister got up, Members crouched down as though listening to the floor or taking cover from a doodlebug. They bore a strong resemblance to a prayer meeting in some far-off mosque. And then . . .

And then a startled but observant Minister discovered that the Members were merely crouching over the tube-like loudspeakers newly fixed to the backs of the seats, and which would, seemingly, better be described as soft-speakers—if that did not confuse them too much with front-bench human speakers on both sides.

The House sat all night on what may have seemed a somewhat futile and repetitive debate, but which was really of great importance to the future of free discussion, because it related to the rights of the Opposition (of whatever Party) to raise matters in Parliament. However, in the end the Government got its way and Standing Orders were amended.

At Question-time in the Commons it was announced that Lord NATHAN, Minister of Civil Aviation, had expended some 31,600 gallons of petrol



"With the compliments of the Committee on un-Athenian Activities, Socrates."

(cost to taxpayer: £20,116) on an 82,178-miles tour of Australia, New Zealand, China and Siam. There were protests from the Conservative benches about this, and Mr. SIDNEY SHEPHERD permitted himself the comment that "Socialist Ministers are gluttons for privilege."

But Lord NATHAN's under-secretary, Mr. LINDGREN, replied that the trip had been an official one, undertaken at the invitation of the Governments concerned, and that his chief had combined a good deal of business with any pleasure he got from the long flight.

Petrol was also the subject of comment in their Lordships' House, where Lord BALFOUR OF INCHRYE was pleading for the restoration of "basic." He got quite eloquent on the subject, and several Labour Lords joined in the demand for the revocation of the "greatest single hardship" as Lord B. of I. called it.

The Lord Chancellor, Lord JOWITT, would do no more than promise that the matter should be kept under review. He mentioned a personal preference for restoring cut food rations rather than petrol.

In the Commons Mr. CHURCHILL gave a very creditable "impression" of

Guy Fawkes (H.E. and all) when Mr. ATTLEE moved the second reading of the Bill under which Burma will become a foreign country, attached to the British Commonwealth only by a treaty. The Prime Minister thought this a very proper (if rather regrettable) step for Burma, as a free country, to take.

Mr. CHURCHILL, however, thought the whole proceeding lamentable, and in a bitter and sarcastic speech forecast "another bloody welter," like that in India, as soon as the peaceful hand of Britain was lifted from the steering wheel. Mr. ATTLEE—said the Conservative leader—must bear a great responsibility for what was to happen, but he was like a signalman who had made a fatal mistake, rather than a murderer. The Opposition would not disgrace itself by having anything to do with the proposals.

This speech shocked a good many in the House, and the terms "outrageous," "vindictive" and "irresponsible" were applied to it by Labour critics. The motion for the Bill's rejection was itself rejected by 288 votes to 114. Which seemed to suggest that some of the two hundred or so Conservative M.P.s did not see eye to eye with their Leader on this matter.

THURSDAY, November 6th.—A day late, there were fireworks in the House of Commons. Almost everything anybody said led at once to Roman candles, squibs and crackers of a magnitude and ferocity seldom seen or heard in that august chamber.

Major LLOYD spoke of "political nepotism," and there was a major uproar, in which Mr. CHURCHILL and Mr. MORRISON (Mr. Speaker intervening) took a leading part. It was difficult to know why this phrase was considered so offensive when its synonym "Jobs for the boys" has been hurled across the floor hundreds of times without undue comment. However, it was probably something to do with yesterday's date, and fireworks there certainly were.

Before that, Mr. ELLIS SMITH, as courteous a gentleman as ever sat in the House, had made a charge against unnamed Presidents of the Board of Trade, in connection with the disposal of some factories at Grantham. After some uproar, Mr. SMITH acceded to the SPEAKER's suggestion that he should withdraw the remark. Mr. SILVERMAN, who used the phrase "offensive lie," was ordered to withdraw it. Which he did. Then they talked about groundnuts, and margarine, and things.



The Cosmic Mess

At the beginning of every Bill (the larva of an Act of Parliament) these words are printed:

"Be it enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—"

If the House of Lords rejects the new Parliament Bill, or, say, an Iron and Steel Nationalization Bill, someone will have a nice job making the appropriate amendment to those words. It will have to be something like this:

"Be it enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty, against the advice and without the consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, but by and with the advice and consent of the Commons only, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, that is to say, The King's most Excellent Majesty, and the Commons, as follows:—"

That will look very well in the Statute Book, won't it?

* * * * *

By the way, why do both Houses of Parliament refer to each other as

"another place"? If a Minister or M.P. wants to say "The conduct of the House of Lords has been statesmanlike and wise", he does not say that. He says: "The conduct of another place has been", etc. There is generally some good reason for old Parliamentary customs, and, if it is not at once apparent, this column is respectfully ready to give them the benefit of any doubt. But the point of this custom has never been explained to this column, and this column, respectfully, of course, finds it a little tiresome. It is as if the Archbishop of Canterbury were to describe the Archbishop of York as "another person". And the thing is not done thoroughly. For when the Commons discuss the Lords' amendments to a Bill the motion is not "That this House doth agree with another place in the said amendment", but "That this House doth agree with the Lords . . ."

* * * * *

"But what did the right honourable gentleman say in 1917?" . . . "I have here a book written by the right honourable Member in 1924. On page 231 he says . . . etc."

At this point in the debate this column generally walks out, whether the right honourable gentleman whose past sayings are being disinterred is Mr. Churchill or Sir Stafford Cripps. This column will never cease to wonder why the real politicians enjoy this game so much. The whole purpose of "democratic" debate, after all, is to get the other fellow to change his mind by persuasion and argument, to make B agree that A is right, or at least is not quite such a dunderhead and traitor as B supposed. Even now, in these days of severe party conflict, a Minister will express the hope that after they have heard his case the other chaps will not press their amendment to a division: and sometimes they don't. Opposition Members will plead with the Chancellor of the Exchequer to soften his heart and reduce the purchase tax on this or that: and sometimes he does. Speeches, whatever they say, do still affect opinion, and even votes. But on these occasions the parties do not jeer at each other. There are smiles and acknowledgments; one chap is glad to have won and the other chap is glad to be such a good chap; reason and tolerance have triumphed, democracy has shown how well it works, and so forth.

But if it is right and proper and democratic to say something different to-day from what you said last week, or even last night, having "listened to reason", why is it so shocking to say something different from what you said twenty years ago? Why all those yells of derision and delight as the "deadly quotations" are trotted out? In no other walk of life, surely, is it considered discreditable to change your mind after many years of changing conditions. What should we think of the doctors or the scientists if they behaved in this way? "Yah, boo! Silly old dentist! He used to think that gold crowns were a good thing: and now he says he doesn't. Just read what he wrote in 1923!" Many years ago Sir Stafford Cripps used to say extraordinary things about the British Empire. This column quoted one of them in its election address. But it is not going to quote it again. For Sir Stafford evidently thinks differently now. And what a good thing!

* * * * *

Here is a simple 2-way block permutation which covers nine matches and guarantees at least seven are correct if the results are included in the 2-way forecasts.

To cover nine matches 2-way in full requires 512 lines. By using two reduced 2-way tables and marking them as a block permutation the 512 lines are reduced to thirty-two.

The block permutation may be used for a nine-match pool without bankers. For pools of ten or more matches introduce bankers as required.

To show how the permutation is marked on the coupon I have used a ten-match pool in the example below, banking on one match and covering the remaining nine 2-way.

Bolton	1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2	Block
Burnley	x banker	Perm.
Leeds	1 1 x x 1 1 x x	8 x 4
Leicester	1 1 1 1 x x x x	= 32 lines
Plymouth	2 x 2 x 2 x 2 x	at 2d.
Reading	x 2 2 x x 2 2 x	= 5s. 4d.

(Sunday paper)

Note the word "simple". And then they say that the British people could never understand Proportional Representation!

* * * * *

This column cannot conceal its indifference to the future of a certain famous footballer who is, it seems, to be "sold on the hoof". Whether at last he is sold to Bolton for £19,000 or to Burbleton West for £10,000 and a couple of half-backs this column will try to keep a stiff upper lip. But the whole affair does seem to support its old contention that there should be a purchase tax on footballers. If you had to pay, say, £24,000 for an £18,000 inside-right, he might not be bought and sold quite so busily. You might even find a team of Burbleton men playing for Burbleton. Now, of course, only one of them has ever been to Burbleton—and he disliked it. Our old friend —, the celebrated full-back, has played for Epsom, Yeovil, York Minster, Plymouth Hoe, Manchester Park, Berwick Rovers, Chiswick Eyot, Severn Tunnel, Skegness, and Colwyn Bay. He was born at Aldershot, and lives at Walthamstow. His total transfer-fees, they say, have been about £120,000, and, at 33½ per cent., would have yielded in purchase tax £40,000. With this, at present rates, the Chancellor could have bought a couple of gins for the nation.

* * * * *

It is hoped in nation-wide, and indeed in over-all circles, that Mr. Henry Strauss, K.C., M.P., will have his *Brochure on Bottle-necks* out by Christmas. A very fine specimen was found last week:

"The fact is that shortages are being inflated by bottle-necks."

A. P. H.

○ ○

"Sussex-Surrey Borders: In a beautiful position, close to well-known town and within 60 minutes of Waterloo.—A Very Fine and Historical Elizabethan Residence (circa 1380)."—Local paper.

Historical?

NOT haply to the casual eye
A thing of grave import,
In airy mood men pass it by
Nor, gazing, pull up short,
This pillar-box, and yet by those
Old letters on its breast
The thoughtful might, one would
suppose,
Be, for the nonce, impressed.

V.R. Of good Victoria's day,
None may compute its age,
Say eighty in a general way
Taking an average;
We deeply muse how things have
changed
Since this red thing was new;
E'en stamps, unless I err, have ranged
From early black to blue.

What secrets of what grave concern
By what past myriads penned
Have been consigned thereto to turn
Up at the other end,

V.R.

What swains have sent in days of
yore
Their posted ardours out,
Each to his private Phyllis, or
The other way about.

And here it stands as erst it stood
Unharmed by Time's rude touch;
In point of fact the neighbourhood
Hasn't, one thinks, changed much;
Only Romance has left it cold,
Th' emotionally prone
Rather than writing as of old
Employ the telephone.

Maybe that hospitable slit
When the last star has set
A subtle fragrance may emit
Of those old secrets yet;
By snooping softly round one might—
You never know these things—
Hear in the still and moonless night
Some spicy whisperings.

DUM-DUM.



"You were simply magnificent in defeat, sir."

At the Play

Anna Lucasta (HIS MAJESTY'S)—Smith (ARTS)

IT is a funny thing about human nature that whereas in real life the happy ending seldom fails to give delight, in art it is often suspect and a ready source of dissatisfaction. And this is not, as at first sight it appears,

Majesty's is a good case in point: Its heroine, having been rather wantonly on the streets, is reclaimed by the love of an innocent young man, only to be swept still farther downhill, where, with many genuine regrets, we are prepared

to leave her; and when Mr. PHILIP YORDAN allows the young man, who takes extraordinarily lightly the discovery that he has married a trollop, to pursue her and cheerfully set about a second reclamation, interest is immediately punctured and we feel let down. In all the circumstances it is an artificial finish, and I think the chief reason why one instinctively rejects it is that even if her husband succeeds in bringing *Anna* to the surface again

their future shows all the signs of being like a hall of mirrors, the rescues getting smaller in the distance. It could certainly happen, but it has no air of finality.

Anna, taken very well by Miss HILDA SIMMS, is powerfully drawn. She is the pick of a ne'er-do-well family, and is a girl of such character that it is a little hard to understand why being disowned by her father should originally have sealed her ruin. The father remains an enigma. He is consumed by a craving for strong drink, a smouldering fire of principle and a hatred for *Anna* which makes him a confusing person. Mr. YORDAN seems to mean him to symbolize something more than an awkward old soak, but exactly what is not clear. The rest of this coloured Pennsylvanian family, *Anna*'s kind old mother, her greedy, raucous sister, the bullying brother-in-law and the others, are extremely real, and the heartless bringing together of *Anna* and the young farmer, simply for the sake of his wallet,

makes a stirring story. For they fall in love. Very delicately and charmingly told, it must be one of the strangest courtships the stage has seen, *Rudolf* blazingly innocent, wooing in terms of the soil, *Anna* at first hard and mocking but gradually melted. Pathos, humour, surging life, the play has all these; it only just fails to be good. Produced by Mr. WALTER THOMPSON ASH, the coloured cast put it over beautifully. Miss SIMMS is an actress of considerable force. Mr. EARLE HYMAN proves his quality by winning for *Rudolf*, who might so easily have been a prig or an ass, our respect as well as our affection. Mr. FREDERICK O'NEAL gives the bully a fine stuffing of platitudes, Miss BETTY HAYNES plays the vixen alarmingly well, and as a dockside siren down on her luck Miss CLAIRE LEYBA rocks the house.

I must confess I enjoyed the production of Mr. SOMERSET MAUGHAM's *Smith* at the Arts much more than some of my fellows seem to have done. It certainly lacks the polish of which a play so wholeheartedly 1909 stands doubly in need, and not all the trivial creatures of a forgotten world carry complete conviction; but I found these faults largely submerged in my pleasure at the skill of Mr. MAUGHAM's writing and the happy way Miss JULIA LANG and Mr. SEBASTIAN SHAW deal with a situation which is still surely a good one. This return of a bronzed Empire-builder to find a practical wife, selected in the same sensible fashion as he would choose a practical plough; his horror at the cheap and callous circle of his bridge-drugged sister; his proposal to *Smith*, paragon of parlourmaids; and the utmost difficulty with which she is persuaded that a gentleman can possibly be a suitable mate for a serious-minded girl, make a piece of comedy so rich in paradox and so wittily set out that it remains funny, even though we know that if *Tom* came back to-day he would find his sister scrubbing the floor and *Smith* at the pictures. It is full of excellent lines. My favourite is when *Tom*, apropos of his rival, the porter, says he doesn't see much good in being able to bend an iron bar in one's hands, and *Smith* primly replies: "Neither do I, sir, but it looks well."

ERIC.

• • •

"Thakin Nu and his colleagues wore ceremonial silks and satins of pink and orange.

"Mr. Attlee, Mr. Bevin, Lord Jowitt, Sir Stafford Cripps and other British Ministers present were in ordinary suits."

"Daily Herald."

Disappointing!



MAN PROPOSES.

Theresa	MISS GEORGIA BURKE
Rudolf	MR. EARLE HYMAN
Anna	MISS HILDA SIMMS

a matter only of probabilities. Perhaps the glibber films and the glossier novels, with their implicit guarantee that however much we may swim in tears on the journey its end shall find the girl safely in the harbour of the hero's arms, have made us cagier than we used to be. But there is also, I think, a fairly general dislike, not by any means limited to highbrows and constitutional pessimists, of being cheated of a good, healthy out-and-out gloom. In the theatre it is as emotionally unnerving as anywhere else to set out in a fit mood for a funeral and to find oneself unexpectedly at a wedding. An author can lead us without difficulty to either, but if he must change direction in his last act the funeral is by far the easier destination. There is nothing wrong with the surprise happy ending as such, indeed, it may be inevitable; all I am saying is that we being as we are it is stubborn and fragile material. *Anna Lucasta* at His



"I've just heard an ugly rumour that SOME people have been getting liver."

At the Opera

Rigoletto (COVENT GARDEN)

AFTER a long provincial tour the Covent Garden Opera Company has returned to London for the winter season. The repertoire includes four operas we heard last season—*Turandot*, *Il Trovatore*, *Carmen* and *Der Rosenkavalier*—to which are now added *Rigoletto* and *Peter Grimes*.

Rigoletto was given on the opening night, and the principal honours undoubtedly went to JAMES BAILEY for his dramatic and colourful settings. The hatred of the courtiers for *Rigoletto* is the mainspring of the drama, and through all the frantic Borgian gaiety of the opening scene it makes itself felt in the music. VERDI's score has a lurid orchestral colouring that suggests the tempest of evil that is about to break, and when the overcharged atmosphere is rent by *Monterone's* curse, as by a flash of lightning, it is a harbinger of inexorable doom.

But the torch lit by VERDI and passed on so ably by JAMES BAILEY is dropped by the producer. The large crowd of courtiers sing well, but they are not (as they should be) the centre

and source of the action. They and *Rigoletto* are the protagonists and the lustful *Duke*, their master, the instrument of their revenge; but the effect they produce is of a crowd of more or less disinterested spectators content to leave the *Duke* to bombinate in a vacuum—an attitude which, however understandable, is not what VERDI intended.

The principal singers for various (and, we hope, temporary) reasons were unable to bring to their respective rôles all that is required of them.

It is certainly more difficult for an Italian to learn to sing in English than it is for an Englishman to learn to sing in Italian. PAOLO SILVERI, the splendid Italian baritone who made so great a reputation in London last year with the San Carlo Opera, has learned English and joined the Covent Garden company, and in singing *Rigoletto* in his newly-acquired English he accomplished a *tour de force*. He was not completely at ease, however, for the full power and richness of his glorious voice were hardly apparent, and its depths of colour not at all; and it seems the more unfortunate that such a voice should be sacrificed on the altar of an absurdity like NATALIA

MACFARREN's creaking English version of the opera when Professor Dent has published an excellent and singable alternative. The same language difficulty, allied with a bad cold, sorely afflicted the *Gilda* also, and caused ELDA RIBETTI to sing most of her rôle apparently with closed lips. KENNETH NEATE, as the *Duke*, acted and sang with vivacity and looked very handsome, but did not quite convince one that he was a sixteenth-century Italian libertine and despot. The best all-round performances came from EDITH COATES, a wholly convincing *Maddalena*, and DAVID FRANKLIN, who made an excellent *Sparafucile*—a rôle which is as important as it is short and difficult to "put over." KARL RANKL conducted energetically but not very inspiringly.

D. C. B.

"Free-Lance Weekly, the free-lance marketing paper, published monthly during the war and recently changed to fortnightly, is being increased in price from 4½d. to 6d. from October 25. Sold only by subscription, the new annual rate is 12s., including postage."—"World's Press News."

Ah, the good old *Three-Shilling Quarterly* . . .



"As soon as ever I settle down to a bit of music,
Betty puts a Schubert record on!"

Our Booking Office

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

William Shirer's Berlin Diary

MR. WILLIAM SHIRER, whose "Berlin Diary" communicated to the American public his impressions of the Third Reich at the zenith of its power, has now provided a sequel, *End of a Berlin Diary* (HAMISH HAMILTON, 15/-), which deals with Berlin and Nuremberg in 1945 and also gives some extracts from the secret German documents captured by the Allies. Hitler's megalomania is freely exhibited in these documents, but of greater interest than this well-worn theme is an occasional document containing the views of his generals. Although presumably passed by Hitler, Jodl's survey of the general position at the close of 1943 is as unbiased as could reasonably be expected in the circumstances. Still more interesting is General Halder's report, drawn up after the end of hostilities, on the Russian campaign. One learns from it that Hitler was "dominated by the illusion that there was a continuous front," and that his impulse to strike like lightning dwindled when his generals wanted him to obliterate Moscow instead of wasting troops in southern Russia. The most curious of Mr. SHIRER's documents is the apologia which Ribbentrop asked Field-Marshal Montgomery to transmit to "Mr. Vincent Churchill" and Mr. Eden. The standpoint of an anti-Nazi German now settled in America is given in a letter from Thomas Mann to a German poet who begged him to return to Germany. "Frankly," he writes, "I do not see why I should not profit from the advantages of my strange destiny, after having tasted its bitterness to the very dregs."

H. K.

Grampie in Demand

In the Cotswold, grandfather is "Grampie"; and Grampie with his traditional skill and zest for work has the village intelligentsia at his feet—at any rate such of them as have neither time, health nor skill to cope with a recalcitrant garden. Mr. C. HENRY WARREN, whose own elder-hedge was admittedly a blot on Essex, has not really made

up his mind whether he wants the Grampies of East Anglia and the Cotswold back or not. The joy, grace and humour of *Adam Was a Ploughman* (EYRE AND SPOTTISWOODE, 10/6) are Grampie's. But admiration for the old days suffers a regrettable diminuendo on the last few pages. Although song is said to have departed from country work since the war, a parting benediction is bestowed on "power" farming; with someone to civilize the farmers in their off-time. Tractors all day and Beethoven all night are a poor substitute for a more integrated if less ambitious life. Possibly a rural education stressing less transient values might produce that balance of the active and contemplative which distinguishes the best of Mr. WARREN's essays? Meanwhile, meet the heroic *mutilé* of "A Bundle of Briars," the stalwarts of "Shake Hands with the King"; and listen to the Quince-and-Bottom back-chat of "Rural Wit." It may be your last chance.

H. P. E.

Henry Fielding

Henry Fielding is so attractive a character, and Miss M. P. WILLCOCKS admires him with such whole-hearted enthusiasm, that her biography, *A True-Born Englishman* (ALLEN AND UNWIN, 15/-), will be read with pleasure by all but the ultra-critical, although it contains nearly three hundred pages where half the number would have sufficed. Our knowledge of Fielding's life is disappointingly small, the only portion of which we have any detailed picture being his voyage to Lisbon in his last months. To fill out her narrative Miss WILLCOCKS has quoted prodigally from Fielding's plays and novels, and has poured out all kinds of information about the social conditions of the age and its leading personages. She has even given us some interesting pages on Glastonbury, the Avalon of the Arthurian legends and meeting place of Celtic and Christian myths, near which Fielding was born, but which Miss WILLCOCKS must be alone in regarding as a particularly suitable birthplace for the author of "Tom Jones." On the whole, the most interesting pages in this book are those which deal with Fielding as a social reformer and magistrate. Even here Miss WILLCOCKS's carelessness about detail is at times disconcerting. Fielding was twelve years old when Addison died, and Addison cannot therefore have made the unpleasant remark about him so strongly deprecated by Miss WILLCOCKS. But she brings out clearly Fielding's absorption towards the close of his life in practical measures for stamping out crime, and providing food, work and shelter for the destitute.

H. K.

Saint Catherine to the Rescue.

A very great spiritual adviser whose "consultants" ranged between a world-famous philosopher and a desert martyr warned the former to "respect the type that God seeks to produce in us." This plea for originality is interesting; because work, which most exhibits character, is less esteemed nowadays in religious circles than its concomitant Christian activities prayer and suffering. It is therefore with a sense of refreshment and gratitude that one reads Count MICHAEL DE LA BEDOYÈRE's *Catherine, Saint of Siena* (HOLLIS AND CARTER, 12/6); for Catherine, like Joan of Arc, put her practical hand to her Lord's plough in a time of desperate need. As orthodox and as unique as the Maid herself, the Sienese dyer's daughter brought back her vacillating Pontiff from Avignon to Rome as St. Joan brought her skulking Dauphin from Orleans to Rheims. Like St. Joan's, her work had its long prelude of prayer and she took suffering in her stride. Much recent

(French) research has been incorporated in this new life, whose translations of Catherine's spirited letters are the biographer's own. One's only regret is that a book so fitted by its generous temper, skilled presentment and admirable illustrations for the popular audience it seeks should have made even a few unnecessary concessions to that audience's supposed taste in narrative. H. P. E.

American Thriller

Stranger Than Truth (EYRE AND SPOTTISWOODE, 9/-) is the third of Miss VERA CASPARY's novels, "Laura" and "Bedelia" having, from all accounts, rung the bell; there is no mistaking its steady chime on this occasion. Her interest is less in blood-spots and policemen's recreations than in the erratic engineering of the human soul, about which she seems a considerable technician, and her description of life in the New York office of a nest of bogusly uplifting magazines is a pleasing piece of satiric narration. In this office there is, owing to an oversight, one honest man, and the mysterious rejection of his story about a current murder starts him on a trail which takes him into some queer places of the mind and nearly ends his life as well as his romance with the boss's lovely daughter. This latter element, so often obnoxious, is woven in with the utmost discretion; indeed its bearing on the plot is vital. Miss CASPARY's people, even the most curious of them, are solid and life-size. They talk well and to the point, and although she keeps up a fast pace she yet finds time for imaginative speculation of much relevance. In particular her study of the narcotic effects of the thought beautiful when dressed up for profit is good enough to be alarming. This novel should evaporate quickly from book-stalls. E. O. D. K.

Hopeful Travellers

"There are some men who will scarce believe anything but what they see, and at the same time will not stir an inch from home to be informed." This testy comment, written by a seventeenth-century Dutchman, is quoted by Mr. PATRICK O'BRIAN at the beginning of his prose anthology, *A Book of Voyages* (HOME AND VAN THAL, 15/-). The book is compiled from many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century books of travel, not easily come by nowadays, and contains a great many amusing extracts. The first is taken from Lady Craven's journey through the Crimea to Constantinople. She appears to have been an intrepid traveller, and had a tart style of writing. In Warsaw she drove in a coach with six horses—"I go thus at full gallop . . . the streets are luckily wide—and custom makes the danger less than one would imagine." Later she writes, "Though I have left my coach and harp at St. Petersburgh, I have all my little necessities—a tin kettle in a basket holds my tea equipage." British, indeed! The Hints to Strangers Travelling Through France, by Philip Thicknesse, are more domestic—"Always carry a machine to secure the bed-chamber doors at innes where you sleep, and see that there are no holes behind large pictures, large enough for a man to creep through." He adds that the washer-women may "trim" the edges of handkerchiefs to make borders for their night-caps, but does not say how this should be prevented except by "taking care." The book includes stories of unpleasant travel (among them the tale of six deserters), of preservations, and pirates, and "Oriental Splendour," and ends with Colonel Norwood's Voyage to Virginia. The editor must be congratulated for having kept the extracts brief and for giving us so much variety. B. E. B.

Nautical Cinderellas

The epic of the tugboat, that unconsidered Cinderella of the sea service, is one which still remains to be written. Lieut.-Commander L. M. BATES, R.N.V.R., has attempted nothing quite so ambitious as an epic in his modest volume of stories and sketches called *Tideway Tactics* (MULLER, 7/6); but he has gone a long way towards introducing to the attention of the general public a class of men and of river craft all too little known. For the most part Lieut.-Commander BATES does for the bowler-hatted skippers and jerseyed deck-hands much what Mr. W. W. Jacobs did for the bargemen of London River, and his yarns of their rivalries, their triumphs and their discomfits, and—of course—their love-affairs make highly entertaining reading. But he is not always in humorous vein, and his account—to take one instance only—of the part played by *The Seal Rover* and her like on the Day of Little Ships recalls memories of which a strangely forgetful generation will be none the worse for being reminded. Above all, as Sir Alan Herbert observes in his foreword, the author knows his river, and has, by right of service, a very sound title to write about it. Mr. NORMAN MANSBRIDGE's amusing grotesques provide an excellent accompaniment to the author's letterpress.

C. F. S.

Thirty of the distinctively individual essays contributed to *Punch* by Miss ANGELA MILNE—those artfully contrived, subtly perceptive pieces, so solid in appearance and so delicately entertaining in effect, each of which flatly announces its subject in the title ("Art," "Science," "Punctuality") and proceeds to examine it thoroughly from every point of view—have been reprinted in a book, *Jam and Genius* (NICHOLAS VANE, 7/6). There are amusing illustrations by "Fuzz," who is said to be a serious artist being playful under a pseudonym.



"I mean, where's your LIBERTY if you're not allowed to wear just whatever the fashion-designers dictate?"



Forthcoming Attraction

MR. ZOONIMAN'S room, though large, was full of smoke. He waved some of it aside and by extending himself fully across his desk was able to shake the tips of my fingers. "You know Mr. What-is-it?" he said, introducing, "and Mr. Something?" Two slight young men stopped pacing Mr. Zooniman's carpet and focused their heavy spectacles upon their new collaborator. "And that?"—Mr. Zooniman nodded at a slumped figure in the corner, "is Mike from the studio." Mike from the studio grunted.

"We hate Mike," said Mr. Something, "because he won't let us burn down the town hall."

Mike said gratingly, "You know what we have to spend on this picture. Blow it up. Models. Cheap. Burning's out." He made a cutting, horizontal gesture with a handful of foolscap.

"All right!" said Mr. Zooniman, loudly, to show that the interruption was over. "Sequence seventy-one." He sat down and banged a stack of actresses' photographs all signed "Yours always" in the same childish hand.

"Yes," said Mr. What-is-it. "The bucket. Now this chap I have in mind does a very funny routine with a bucket. It's laughs we want, isn't it, Zooty?"

"If it's logical," said Mr. Zooniman. "We can make it logical," said Mr. What-is-it. "Twist it. Now this chap gets his foot in the bucket—"

"You mean the insurance-agent?" said Mr. Something, who was wearing a dinner-jacket, I now saw, under his teddy-bear coat. He unwrapped a packet of sandwiches and began to eat, frowning.

"Just a minute." Mr. Zooniman held up his cigar and turned to me. "Did I ask you to do some dialogue for the village postman and a spiv?" I opened my mouth to say yes, but Mr. Zooniman waved it shut. "Well, this is the scene we're having instead of that, where this wines and spirits traveller—"

"Insurance-agent," put in Mr. What-is-it, taking one of Mr. Something's sandwiches.

"Yes, yes." Mr. Zooniman was faintly impatient. "Insurance-agent he is now. He comes round after the train scene and Haskins thinks he's from the railway police and has to pretend—"

"Er—excuse me," I said.

"Yes, Jim?" said Mr. Zooniman, blinding me with a huge, inviting smile.

"There was some provisional dialogue in my script for the scene in the train. I—er—I didn't care for Haskins saying 'I've never been so insulted in all my life.' I thought perhaps—"

I had intended to explain that it was dialogue of this kind that I hoped to trounce out of the sound-track for ever, had meant to describe how I felt when I heard screen voices saying "I can explain everything," and "There must be some mistake," and—but Mr. Zooniman switched off his smile and said, "Yes, yes, but we've altered all that. The revolver doesn't go off now until they're in the car."

"I thought we were going to have them on bicycles," said Mr. Something, moving his sandwiches to the far end of the mantelpiece.

"Car," said Mr. Zooniman.

"I've got to go soon," said Mr. What-is-it, through crumbs. "What about this bucket?"

Mr. Something said "So have I," and added in a hoarse aside to Mike—"I suppose we can afford a bucket?" The figure in the corner raised a tired hand in acknowledgment of the jest.

"Is the bucket logical?" asked Mr. Zooniman again.

"If it's the farmhouse scene," I began with nervous helpfulness—

"The farmhouse is out," said Mr. Zooniman. "I've got a revise for you."

"Since when?" demanded Mr. What-is-it, looking at his watch and reaching over for another sandwich.

"Animals," said Mike, gratingly, and was seen in the blue dimness to be shaking his head heavily.

"It's Mike," explained Mr. Zooniman. "Feeding, housing, R.S.P.C.A., he says. So the scene with the detectives is in Regent's Park, with Westlake just chased by one animal—you've agreed that, Mike?—say a giraffe, or

one of those striped ponies. Then when they—”

There was a loud slap as Mr. What-is-it smote his brow. “Window-cleaner,” he said—“that’s how.”

“How what?” said Mr. Something.

“How to get the bucket. We fade in on a window-cleaner packing up. Wheels his ladders off, leaves the bucket on the—”

“In Regent’s Park?” said Mr. Something, raising his eyebrows.

“Oh, for Pete’s sake, man,” said Mr. What-is-it crossly—“it could be near Regent’s Park, couldn’t it? It’s a bigger laugh, anyway, this chap being chased by a kangaroo down, say, Great Portland Street. I mean, if an animal escapes from the Zoo it doesn’t necessarily keep to the park, does it? Especially now the railings—”

“Don’t forget the plot,” warned Mr. Zooniman. He added kindly to me, “Eh, Jim?” I don’t know why he kept calling me Jim. He could have looked up my name from my agent’s letter.

“Not a kangaroo,” grated Mike.

“I’m remembering the plot,” said Mr. What-is-it, looping the belt of his overcoat and hunching his shoulders. He pointed suddenly at Mr. Zooniman’s nose, causing him to flinch back in his chair a trifle. “Because this window-cleaner could see something through the window—”

Mr. Zooniman shook his head and pursed his lips puritanically. “We don’t want anything like that,” he said.

“It isn’t anything like that, if you’ll let me finish. He could see the old man tearing up the will.”

There was a momentary hush. Mr. Zooniman felt his bluening jaw and looked thoughtfully at the ceiling. Mr. Something laid a crust with deliberation on the arm of Mike’s chair.

“It would mean,” Mr. Something said slowly, “that the old man couldn’t be in the train party and pull all the chain out of the communication-cord. It’s a big laugh gone.”

“By the way,” said Mr. Zooniman, “we’ve changed it to an Underground train, not a main line. I believe it’s a bus in your copy, Jim, but I’ll let you have a revise on that.”

“Thank you,” I said. “Is that the scene where the old man’s niece—?”

“Sister,” said Mr. Something. “A niece wouldn’t be old enough to remember his affair with the suffragette—”

“It would mean,” said Mr. Zooniman, weighing every word—“it would mean no scene with Mary.”

“Where she finds the torn-up will in the cookery-book, yes,” said Mr. Something. “And that’s funny. I ought

to know, because I wrote it. Where she pretends to make up recipes on the spur of the moment to deceive the boy’s mother—”

“They don’t have chains on the Underground,” said Mr. What-is-it, suddenly, but with faint triumph. “Only handles.”

“Good point,” said Mr. Zooniman at once. “Good boy. We’ll switch it back to main line.”

“I wrote it main-line,” said Mr. What-is-it. “I didn’t say anything at the time, but I could never see the point of changing it in the first place.”

“It was the escalator sequence,” said Mr. Zooniman.

“Oh, yes,” said Mr. What-is-it. “We shall have to think of something else for that. And on that note of suspense”—he rolled up Mr. Something’s sandwich-wrapping and missed the wastepaper-basket with a mock-athletic throw—“I shall leave you. Anybody want a lift to Leicester Square?”

Mr. Something put on his hat and

stuffed a jumble of foolscap into his overcoat pocket. “Thank you,” he said. Mike heaved himself up and grunted “Me too.”

“Anyway,” said Mr. Zooniman, doing up his waistcoat and opening a glass door which led rather surprisingly to a small lift—“we can at least feel we’re getting somewhere with it now.”

“Taking shape, taking shape,” said Mr. Something.

I shook hands with Mr. Zooniman and huddled into the lift with the others. They seemed very pleased with the evening’s work, and when we got to the street Mr. What-is-it said they could wedge me in the car if I didn’t mind riding three in front. I declined with thanks.

“Next conference Thursday,” said Mr. Something. “See you then.”

“Right,” I said, and waved good-bye. But I don’t know. Thursday’s only two days off, and I’ve an uncomfortable feeling that I’ve got one of those colds coming. Everyone’s getting them. My head feels terribly stuffed up.

J. B. B.



“Looks like they’re closing the gap.”

WHEN Mr. Emery Wheel, in a speech at the Old Carboys' Annual Dinner, likened the Blue Duck Inn to a beacon ("an *ignis fatuus* set upon a steep hill"), he was, I thought, laying it on a bit thick, though I felt bound to nod acknowledgment at the time. I certainly concede that most world problems get a rather penetrating going-over from our little circle under the potted fern, and are all the better for it. Albert sometimes verges on the hysterical, but I generally manage to shout him down.

Only the other day we were drawing up a seven-point programme. I had got to my fifth point when Albert unsheathed a mouth-organ from his waistcoat pocket, clamped one hand meditatively over his ear, and began whistling away at a Rumanian folk-song. He knows perfectly well that this song distracts me—indeed, it was on first hearing him play it that I became a fervid supporter of the Iron Curtain, which should, I maintain, have been imposed before the song got out.

I frowned disapproval, my forefinger still uplifted. He has a snuffling, sickly tone, like a weak-minded bee thrashing about in a bag of crumbs. I dislike too the scrubbing noise of his moustache passing up and down the instrument.

"Dash it!" exclaimed Albert, breaking off in a temper. "Did you notice that 'orrible note?"

"Which one?" I asked coldly.

"This 'ere," said Albert, goading it unmercifully with a pin. "One o' my favourite notes, too."

"It's getting worse," I said. "Why not lay the thing aside to cool off?"

"I keep on making mistakes too," he said, looking hard at me.

"Quite."

"I mean *here*," he said hotly. "I play very nice at home, but with you

Eye to Eye

glaring at me I keep on blowing when I ought to suck. It makes a different tune altogether."

"Now that's rather interesting," remarked Mr. Emery Wheel.

Before I could stop him he plunged into a long anecdote about a recent concert. A man in the audience had brought the thing to a standstill by fixing his thought on the soloists.

"I myself have a singularly powerful right eye," I said, beaming down at the dog. "Did you notice that?"

The dog had been drifting about the bar in circles; at my glance it lay across Albert's feet with a whimper. The two things had no connection of course, but I had to stop Emery somehow. I hate people who try to monopolize conversation.

"Extraordinary!" exclaimed Emery.

"Quite," I said, raising my forefinger. "Now my fifth point—"

"Blow your fifth point!" cried Albert, furiously polishing his instrument on his lapel. "I'm sick of points."

"And blow your mouth-organ, if it comes to that," I retorted with some heat.

Realizing my mistake at once, I snatched up my umbrella, but he got his instrument to his lips before I could ward it off. Again we heard the folk-song, now all shot through with variations. I turned away with a shudder and fell to contemplating the dog. Its brow was racked with pain, and from time to time it shivered or gave out a little yelp of anguish, like a man checking over his football coupon on Saturday evening.

Suddenly, in the middle of a bit that sounded suspiciously like "Lohengrin" to me, the dog leaped up and raced demented round Albert's feet. He dropped his mouth-organ, and before he could dive after it the dog had seized it and fled howling into the night.

"Now look what you've done with that 'orrible eye of yours!" cried Albert. "You've drove the bloomin' dog mad."

"Not at all," I said. "Those variations snapped something in its brain, and I'm not surprised."

"Ho, no. Many a time it's lay there listening to me, wagging its tail like billy-ho."

"It was fighting for self-control," I said. "I was watching it."

"I know he was," said Emery darkly. "He never took his eyes off that dog. I see him distinct."

I turned on Emery, and he averted his eyes.

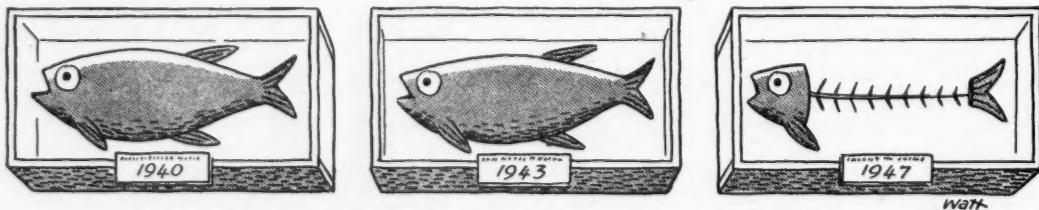
"That was pure coincidence," I shouted. "It is well known that I have a particularly mild and benevolent gaze, except when people split infinitives."

Albert was inconsolable, but it is difficult to reason with a man who shields his eyes with his hat whenever you look at him. Indeed the whole atmosphere at the Blue Duck Inn is difficult. Conversation is disjointed, and there are long periods of silence.

Now it has long been my custom at such times to throw out some quip or snippet of news, or maybe a shaft of wit. On these occasions a little premonitory gleam comes into my eyes, and it is vexing to see Albert rush from the bar as soon as my gaze falls upon him. Even a chance meeting of eyes is embarrassing for all parties, and for the time being I have taken to sitting back in my corner and reading a large book, holding it very high.

I do, however, occasionally peep beneath its pages. I notice that Albert is petting the dog a great deal. One can't be too careful—I have a pretty shrewd idea where it buried the mouth-organ outside.

I think I am right too. Since I shifted part of the rock garden on to the spot the dog looks as despondent as Albert.



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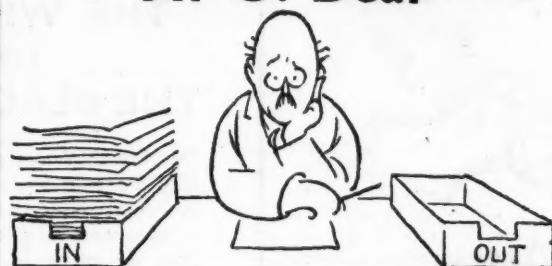
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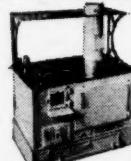
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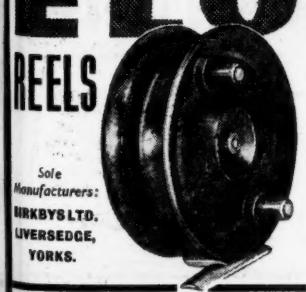
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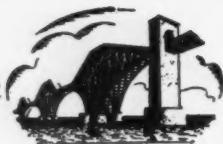
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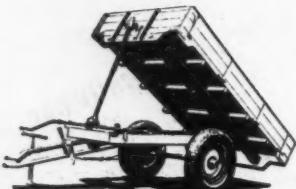
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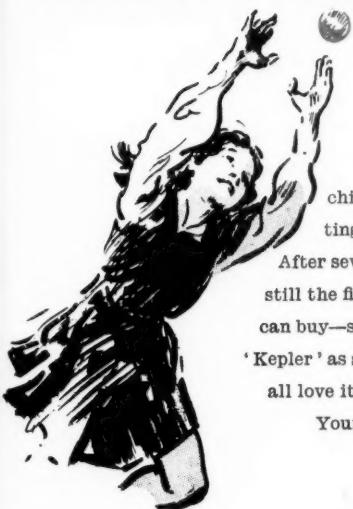
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Donations may be sent to the Rt. Hon. The Earl of Athlone, K.G., G.C.B., President of the Y.M.C.A. War and National Service Fund, 112 Great Russell St., London, W.C.1
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